

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of

Creation of a Low
Power Radio Service

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MM Docket No. 99-25

To The Commission:

REPLY COMMENTS OF

**METRO DETROIT BROADCASTING
CORPORATION**

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CORPORATION**

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September 17, 1999

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Metro Detroit Broadcasting Corporation (A Metro Detroit_≡), by its attorney, hereby submits its Reply Comments in the above-referenced proceeding, which proposes the creation of a new, low power broadcasting service (hereinafter A Low Power FM_≡). These Reply Comments reiterate Metro Detroit_≡s position that the Commission must promptly create Low Power FM service in a manner which counters the massive consolidation being witnessed in the broadcasting arena. The Commission_≡s Low Power FM rules should both boost the number of new-entrants in broadcasting ownership as well as assist small broadcasters who seek to provide an alternative voice to mega-radio holding companies. Such a service would accomplish the Commission_≡s stated goals of increasing the diversity of programming and ownership in the broadcasting arena. *Notice of Proposed Rule Making* in MM Docket No. 99-25, FCC 99-6 (rel. Jan. 28, 1999) (ANPRM_≡).

I. BACKGROUND OF METRO DETROIT

Metro Detroit is the general partner in Highland Park Broadcasting L.P. (A Highland Park Broadcasting_≡), a holder of a construction permit for low-power television station W68CH (ATV68")

in Detroit, MI. Metro Detroit's principal stockholders are amongst the most experienced broadcasters in Detroit.¹ Metro Detroit's President & CEO, Robert J. (ARJ) Watkins, also presides over a nonprofit company that operates a 10-watt Class-D FM noncommercial radio station, WHPR-FM (A88.1").² Although both TV68 and 88.1 are low power facilities, each station is operated in a manner that seeks to make the best use of their collective resources. Since neither TV68 nor 88.1 are full power facilities, Metro Detroit maintains that it would not be prohibited from owning Low Power FM stations under the Commission's proposed rules.

II. RECENT NAACP CRITICISM OF TELEVISION INDUSTRY UNDERSCORES URGENT NEED FOR DIVERSITY

Recent efforts of the NAACP, the Association of Blacks in Media & Entertainment (ABME) and others have raised awareness of the lack of diversity in television programming. Some television networks have made minor adjustments to "diversify" their programming line ups. However, such "quick-fix" approaches will do little to provide quality and sustainable programming diversity.

The Low Power FM service proposed by Metro Detroit's offers an opportunity to tangibly create and sustain new entrants. Furthermore, it provides an avenue for small broadcasters to maintain the valuable presence that they have brought to broadcasting. If broadcasters truly seek to advance diversity, supporting Metro Detroit's proposal is a great chance to accomplish their aim.

III. BY SUPPORTING METRO DETROIT'S PROPOSALS FOR THE LOW POWER SERVICE BROADCASTERS CAN DEMONSTRATE THEIR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY.

¹ Notably, Metro Detroit's President, RJ Watkins is known throughout Detroit as the host of tular programs, ALatenight Entertainment, a talk-show, and AThe New Dance Show. Watkins, like y others in Detroit broadcasting, started their careers with WGPR-TV/AM.

² The licensee of the low power Class D station is RJ's Late Night Entertainment, Inc.

Recognizing the potential divisiveness of this issue, Metro Detroit Broadcasting Corporation has stepped forward with a plan that represents a win-win scenario for many broadcasters. This company, which operates a radio and television station in Detroit, has proposed that the Commission permit small broadcasters (i.e., those with ownership interests in two or fewer licenses) to own and operate low power FM stations.

Metro Detroit Broadcasting's proposals are predicated upon the Commission adequately addressing any "real" interference issues. These recommendations also take into consideration that single or dual station owners comprise a significant portion of the broadcasting community. Such broadcasters are desperately seeking opportunities to expand in order to remain viable. By including small broadcasters within the potential pool of applicants, the FCC can increase the prospects of LPFM succeeding.

IV. TRUE MOTIVE BEHIND OPPOSITION OF SOME BROADCASTERS

The National Association of Broadcasters is strongly opposed to the Commission's proposal to create hundreds if not thousands of new FM radio stations throughout the U.S. Even some Black and noncommercial broadcasters have argued against the proposed Low Power FM service (See *Comments of Minority Members of North Carolina Association of Broadcasters*, *Comments of National Public Radio*). This is strikingly surprising as such entities are traditional supporters of other equal opportunity initiatives

Metro Detroit contends that the technical issues raised by these broadcasters are insincere. Rather, it appears that these broadcasters view diversity of ownership as simply more competition. Unfortunately, these and others in the broadcasting community are afraid of the competition that would be created even by the proposed low power stations.

It is Metro Detroit's opinion that fears expressed by some broadcasters are actually driven by their recognition that the public is interested in a greater variety of programming. To some

broadcasters, its more cost effective to program to larger audiences rather than attempting to offer the variety that is so desired by the listening public. Sensing this public demand, broadcasters are seeking to avoid any new service which would seek to satisfy this public demand.

V. CONCLUSION

Metro Detroit believes that the Commission is obligated to permit the market place to work in the context of broadcasting. By permitting small broadcasters to operate low power stations, the Commission would expand competition. Increased competition would do nothing short of improving the quality of service being offered by the broadcasting service.

As we approach the dawn of a new millennium, let's usher in a new era of diversity and competition in the communications industry. The Commission's Low Power FM proceeding is a golden opportunity for the industry to take meaningful steps to bring about "real" diversity, both in front and behind the microphone (and the screen).

Respectfully submitted,

METRO DETROIT BROADCASTING
CORPORATION

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